

**Planning Commissioner's Written Comments
February 9, 2016**

HOPE VALLEY COMMONS BUSINESS PARK - Z1500023

BRINE - I voted in favor of this rezoning request because I thought that a commercial use on this site was reasonable. I note that the proposed use (self-storage) is not committed, and I think that the application would be stronger if the proposed use was committed. The site is suitable for a self-storage use.

BUZBY – I vote to approve.

FREEMAN – Some.

GHOSH – Voted in favor of this proposal.

HARRIS – Voted yes.

HUFF – I urge the elected officials to deny this request for a plan amendment and rezoning because Office Institutional is the appropriate transition between the commercial zoning to the north and the residential to the south. Rezoning to Commercial General opens up the property in question to development that will negatively impact the residential neighborhood it adjoins. There are problems even if the self-storage facility is built and there are no guarantees it will be. I think it is also possible the people most likely affected by the proposed change, the renters in the apartments to the south, have not been adequately informed. That is something that must be determined. The case for this rezoning is presented **as if** the developer were going to build a selfstorage facility. Given there are at least 16 self-storage facilities within 8 miles of this site and another 18 within 9 miles (total 34), one has to ask why anyone would want to put one here.

As it turns out the answer lies in a couple of facts unique to self-storage. These facilities are, according to Bloomberg, the most risk-free of real estate investments with a breakeven occupancy rate of 40% to 45%. (With his money safe a developer needn't care if the facility is mostly redundant.) A self-storage facility is relatively innocuous. There isn't a lot of traffic associated with one or a lot of noise. As to impinging negatively on residents' lives, it would not raise the kind of red flags that a proposal to build, say, a filling station and convenience store would. Thus a developer can acquire a less restrictive zoning and be free to build whatever he wants either immediately or later. This makes self-storage a perfect placeholder. The developer before us made **no** commitment to what we see is a safe investment. This raises the suspicion he is either casting about for or already has secured a project that would negatively impact the apartment dwellers to the south—that he has a project in mind that would have received considerable more scrutiny from the reviewing boards and commissions. The developer mentioned that no one came to the community meeting he advertised. If you examine the organizations notified, you will see that not one directly adjoins this project. Did anyone contact

the actual residents of the apartments to the south? Is this another case where a property owner of a complex gets notified and the residents are left in the dark? If the apartment dwellers were in fact notified, were they told simply a selfstorage was proposed and not given the complete ramifications of the rezoning? We examine rezonings because we want to create better communities. We do not achieve this aim by ignoring renters. We do not achieve this aim by allowing junk development when we could utilize this property to enhance its environs.

HYMAN - Move forward with a favorable recommendation.

KENCHEN – I vote to approve.

MILLER - The city council should deny this rezoning request because the arrangement of land uses on the current FLUM makes sense. The subject property, if developed commercially, would have no street face. Its only connection with a public road would be via a drive created to serve a commercial project which faces both 751 and 54. Any commercial development built on the subject property would be oriented toward the rear of other developments. Commercial developments should be inviting and not open to the utility spaces, loading docks and back door of other uses. It makes more sense for this property to be united with the properties in front of it which face 54. All of it can be developed for office providing a better stepdown between the commercial development at the corner and the land designated for open space to the south. The developer says he will develop the property as storage. If he were willing to commit to this use, my concern about facing would be diminished, but since there is no commitment, my opposition stands.

WHITLEY – I vote to approve.

VANN – Did have a neighborhood meeting. No commitment. No opposition from community. I voted in favor of this case.